

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

**Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus**

EMBARGOED UNTIL:
11:06 am – April 13, 2002

CONTACT:
Dena Graziano (202) 226-6888

CONGRESSMAN JOHN CONYERS, JR. **RESPONDS TO PRESIDENT'S RADIO ADDRESS**

CRITICIZES REPUBLICANS FOR REJECTING EFFORTS TO INCREASE PENALTIES ON WHITE COLLAR FRAUD

Congressman John Conyers issued the following statement in response to President Bush's Saturday morning Radio Address:

"Enron is not just a story about corporate mismanagement, as some would have us believe. There was a real human cost. Thousands of hardworking Americans — Enron employees, teachers in Florida and New York, and employees with retirement plans throughout the nation -- counted on the fraudulent representations of Enron executives about their pension funds. Now, they have little or nothing to retire on.

But the Republicans just don't get it. Their pension bill would open up new loopholes that would allow corporate executives to quickly sell off all of their plummeting stock holdings at the expense of hardworking employees who have to wait five years. You don't have to be a wall street expert to know that this won't help hardworking Americans with their retirement security.

Tougher penalties will make it far less likely that future Enrons will occur. Because Enron isn't a single isolated case. White collar fraud cases like it are popping up all over the place against Global Crossing, Qwest Communications and other companies. Their accountants, investment bankers and lawyers are now being investigated for possible collusion by regulatory agencies in Washington and by Congress itself.

Every one knows that the current white collar crime laws are too lax and that too many people in the current Administration look the other way. And its time we make it clear that white collar criminals will be prosecuted just like any others.

The amendment that Republicans rejected in Congress this week in a straight party line vote would have closed the loopholes that exist in current law.

So, why didn't they go along?

Most people have figured out that the reason the President and the Republicans don't want to get tough with white collar criminals is because they are their friends, they work together and they go to the same country clubs.

The President first claimed that he did not know Kenneth Lay, the former CEO of Enron. But then it turned out that to the President, Lay was really "Kenny Boy."

The Secretary of the Army is an ex-Enron boss who is now being investigated for a whole string of possible violations of the law.

So, we don't have to pretend that there is a mystery why our Congressional proposal to toughen criminal penalties against those that rip-off pension funds was voted down by the Republicans this week in Congress."

